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Maj and Capt-

Sirs,

My name is 2Lt Jennifer Engh. I spoke with both of you on the phone earlier this year about my Master's degree project on the current USAFA assignment system. Since we last talked I have collected data from a group of 2Lts from the Class of 2000 regarding their view of the Air Force Assignment System for USAFA graduates. Based on the data, I have proposed a new model to attempt to address the issues perceived to exist in the old system (used for Class of 2000).

I have attached a word document that contains explanations of what I see as some possible strategies to address these issues. It describes the current system (again, the system used for Class of 2000) and proposes more options for Lts on 'casual' status. Could you please take a look at this proposed model and give me some feedback regarding the feasibility of these solutions? I am hoping to use your inputs to change and refine the model. My project must be finalized by the end of April, so I hope you will have time to read over this within the next week or so. I am sorry for the short notice, but your contributions will be greatly appreciated.

In addition, note that I have cited both of you in the attached document. Let me know if I have used any of your comments incorrectly and I will be happy to revise them.

Finally, please forward this email to anyone (other officers) whom you feel may be interested in this topic and might have recommendations to add.

Thanks again for all of your help.

Respectfully,

2Lt Jennifer Engh

Colorado State University Graduate Student

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Current Model. The following model (see Figure 1) represents the present state of the assignment system for USAFA graduates:

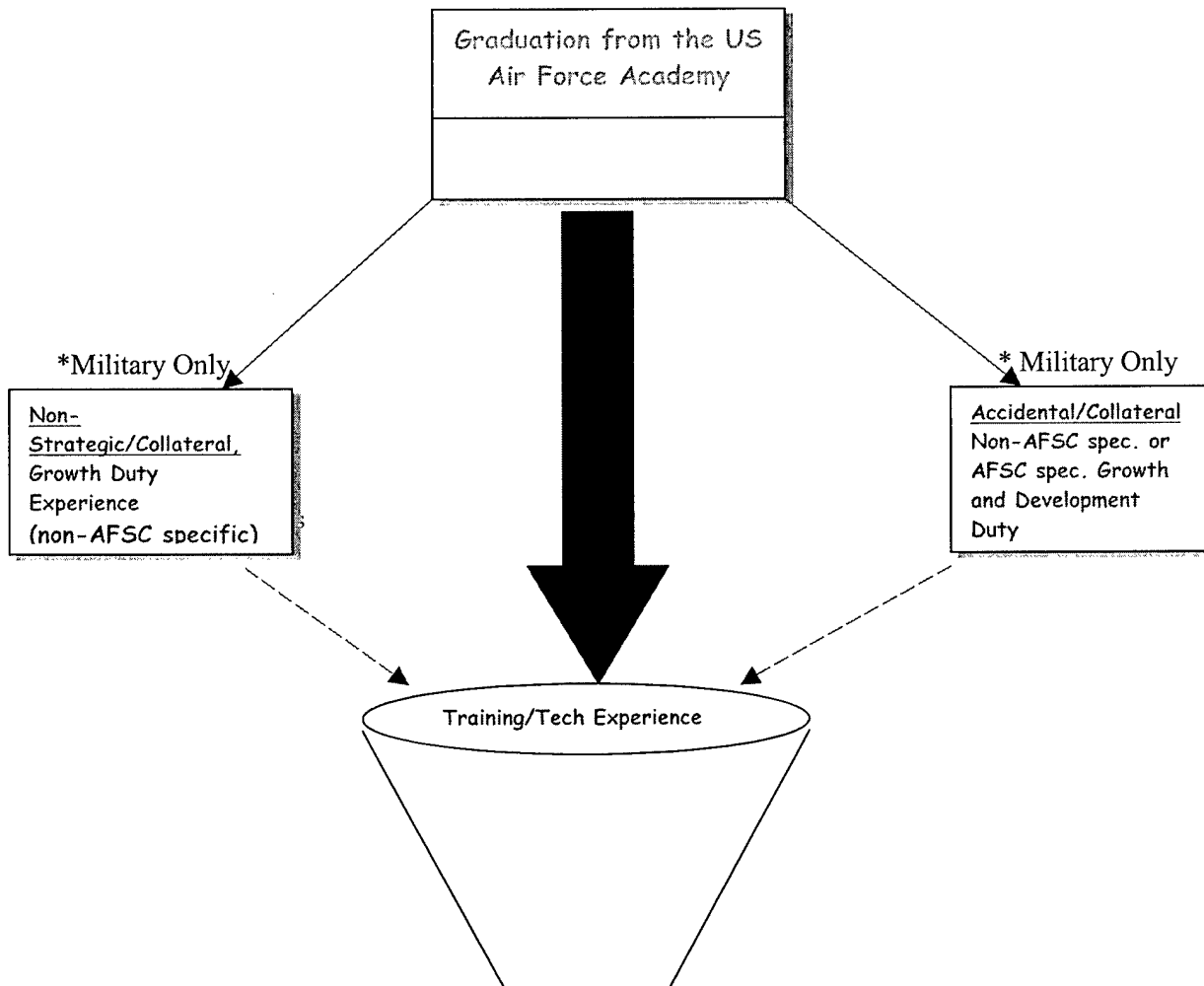


Figure 1. Current Assignment System for USAFA graduates

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

The assignment process begins well before graduation when 4th year cadets (a.k.a. Firsties) pick either a rated or non-rated career path. The exact career field, or AFSC, and base location are determined by a cadet's personal career preferences, class ranking at graduation, and the needs of the Air Force, as articulated by Air Force Personnel Command (AFPC) located at Randolph, AFB, TX (Nipper, 2001). The top box in the above model indicates this decision.

Next, the three arrows originating at the decision box symbolize the three different tracks that are available to USAFA graduates at the present time. The large purple arrow pointing directly downward towards the training funnel indicates graduates who go directly to their specific training school after graduation. According to Air Force Personnel Command (AFPC), approximately 15%-20% of USAFA graduates attend training either in route to their first duty station or within 90 days of commissioning (Miller, 2000). AFPC is directed to have non-rated graduates to their initial skills training within 6 months of their commissioning. This schedule is adhered to rather consistently every year.

The system for rated graduates differs slightly. New rated commissionees are scheduled for Introductory Flying Training (IFT) after graduation if they were not able to take the IFT program as a cadet. Once IFT is completed, if the Lt's wait time until UPT is greater than 6 months (180 days), they are sent to an operational base on 'casual' status (Nipper, 2001). If there is between 90-180 days between IFT and the UPT start date, they will remain on casual status at USAFA (Nipper, 2001). Finally, if there are less than 90 days between IFT and UPT, the Lt is sent directly to their UPT base where they perform casual duties until their pilot training start date (Nipper, 2001). According to AFPC, the shortest wait for new Lts going to UPT is approximately 4-5 months after commissioning (Miller, 2000). The longest wait ranges between 12-14 months after commissioning (Miller, 2000).

The green arrow pointing diagonally to the left track represents the graduates who are placed into non-strategic/collateral, non-AFSC specific, duty experiences. In other words, the left box represents jobs such as being a messenger, snack provider or copy runner, where little mental stimulation or responsibility is required for a particular job.

Finally, the red arrow pointing to the right track represents graduates who are assigned to accidental/collateral (non-AFSC specific or AFSC specific) growth and development duty assignments. An example that would fall into this category is a graduate who is assigned to an executive position in a flying squadron, which is a job normally carried out by someone with more rank than a 2Lt. In this case, the Lt assigned to the job would be challenged on a daily basis to gain a vast amount of knowledge and experience in order to succeed in the position. However, it is merely by chance that the job a Lt falls into is a challenging and rewarding one, which is why this route is termed "accidental." In all three tracks, the jobs that are available to USAFA graduates are limited strictly to military assignments. This is also noted on the model.

In the Air Force, the mission is to protect the lives of Americans, which makes efficiency essential. The Air Force must attempt to get the maximum output from each service member while trying to maximize economic efficiencies. However, the question arises if this has been the case with the USAFA assignment system of the past?

Could a better system greatly improve the efficiency of the assignment process? If yes, how would the current system be modified or what would an entirely new system look like? It is not feasibly possible to put all 1,000 USAFA graduates through the training process all at one time. The training schools are not capable of handling those kinds of numbers of trainees and it would cost too much to expand the schools to that capacity (Nipper, 2001). Therefore, the new system must provide a way for those LTs who do not directly enter the training pipeline to be more useful and productive to the Air Force while they wait. In order to get a better feel for exactly what changes need to be made to the current USAFA assignment system, we must take a closer look at what problems exist. In order to do that, we will specifically target the affected population; Lts who graduated from USAFA.

Proposed Model

The following model (see Figure 2) is a representation of a modified assignment system. It presents three different track alternatives for USAFA graduates. Though the basic goals of the assignment system have remained the same, several career options have been added to more efficiently deal with the large number of graduates pending their training programs. The first track (purple arrow) is a direct entrance into the training process. Again, on this track a new LT would go directly to a training base and be trained in their AFSC. Upon completion, they would immediately be placed in a position that is specific to their AFSC.

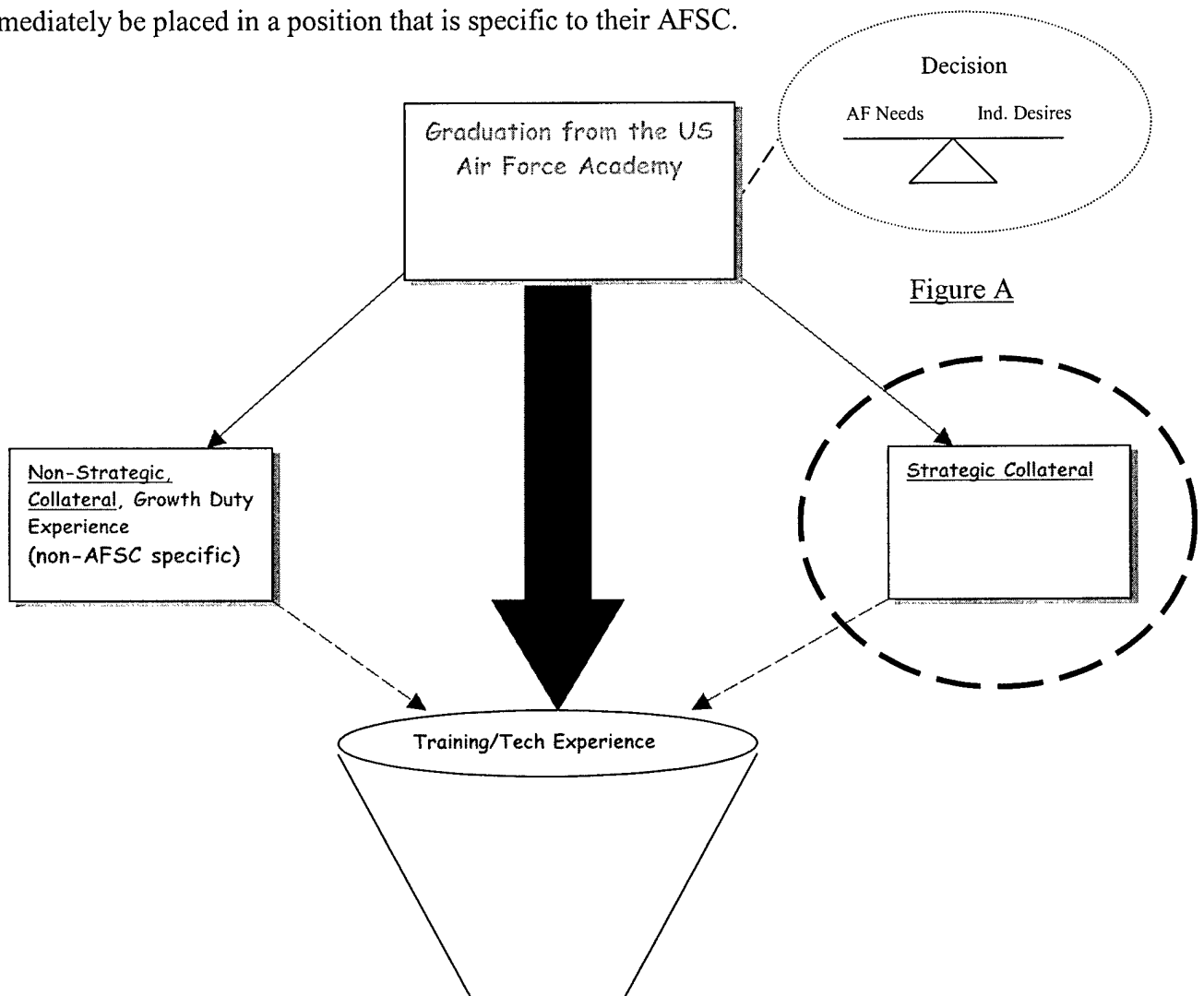


Figure 2. Proposed Assignment System for USAFA graduates

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

The second track, called the Strategic Collateral track, (red arrow pointing diagonally to the right) would allow new Lts several options to choose from after graduation. As it is noted in the enlargement (see Figure 3), the first option in the Strategic Collateral track is to take a leave of absence from the Air Force until the start of their training program.



Figure 3. Strategic Collateral Track in Proposed Model

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

In other words, the officer would relinquish all Air Force responsibility and live as a civilian for an allotted amount of time. In this time frame, they would be required to either gain employment or receive educational services, or both. By choosing this option, a Lt would be able to make use of their waiting period by maintaining the high academic standards and work ethic that were enforced at USAFA. Much like the current Air Force Institute of Technology

(AFIT) system, where graduates are sent to a civilian school for one to two years to obtain a Masters or Doctorate degree, Lts who decided to get more schooling would fall under the auspices of the nearest ROTC detachment or Active Duty Base. The idea behind this track is that by getting a civilian job or going to school, a LT can bring back useful skills to the Air Force from the civilian world and they can maintain a high level of work ethic and mental stimulation. Currently, the Air Force sponsors a similar program called Education with Industry (EWI). In this program, Air Force officers are released to work for civilian corporations for an allotted amount of time. The same standards that are used with other AFIT officers obtaining education would be used for this program. However, the concepts of compensation and added commitment time would have to be looked at very carefully in order to make the program worthwhile for the Air Force to pursue.

The next option in the 2nd track would assign newly commissioned Lts to reserve and guard units. LTs could choose this option, which is similar to the previous choice except that they would not have a civilian experience, rather, they would have a reserve or guard experience. While acting on reserve status, they would eliminate the need for the current reservists, which again would save the Air Force a large sum of money. In addition, they would gain valuable experience by dealing with their AFSC firsthand, yet in a setting where errors may not be as crucial to a mission.

The final option in this track is to serve and gain experience in another branch of the US Military. Spending time with the Army, Navy, Marines, or Coast Guard would give a new LT a broader perspective of the military and how the different branches work together to provide our country its protection. It would also indoctrinate Lts in the protocol of being an officer in the military and the behavior and responsibilities that accompany that title. Finally, a cross-service

assignment would provide a LT with opportunities to meet people and network with other officers that may be important assets to joint-operations in the future.

Lastly, the 3rd track, or Non-Strategic Collateral track, is comprised of the inevitable group of graduates who are placed in jobs that do not directly correlate with their skills, and who are not challenged. However, by removing a large number of graduates and offering them opportunities in the civilian world, guard and reserve units, as well as the other services, there would be significantly fewer people in this group than at the present time.

Similar to the current system, in the proposed model, the track a Lt ends up on will have everything to do with their all-around performance at USAFA. Those who are top performers will be allowed the first choice, the next highest performers next, etc. Thus, good performance is rewarded with the choice of which direction to go after graduation. If getting directly to pilot training is of the utmost importance to a Lt and he or she has performed well at USAFA, the opportunity to fly will be available. On the other hand, if getting a Masters and taking a break from life in the Air Force is what a Lt desires, then that choice can be honored as well. However, as with anything, the lower the class rank at graduation, the harder it will be for a LT to get their track preference.

PROFESSIONAL PAPER

**Changing the Air Force Assignment System for Second Lieutenants:
Operation "E"- Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Enhancement**

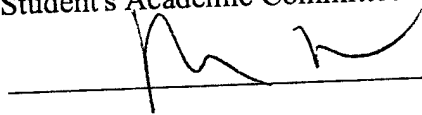
Submitted by
Second Lieutenant Jennifer A. Engh
HRD Graduate Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master's Education and Human Resource Studies

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Spring 2001

WE HEREBY ACCEPT THIS PROFESSIONAL PAPER PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION, AS
FULFILLING THE RESEARCH COMPONENT OF THE HRD SPECIALIZATION

Student's Academic Committee on Graduate Work



Timothy Gray



Dr. Gary D. Geroy, Advisor

Professor: Human Capital & Economic Development

Abstract

The effective use of United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) Second Lieutenants (2Lts) is an important issue for the Air Force to consider in the 21st Century. There is an emerging concern that USAFA 2Lts are not being utilized to their full potential. As a result, possible effects may include a decrease in the retention of Air Force Personnel (specifically USAFA graduates), a lack of productivity on the job, and negative impacts on the potential for success for USAFA graduates. In order for the Air Force to address the problem, further research must be done to determine what modifications to the current assignment system are necessary to alleviate the negative effects.

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Changing the Air Force Assignment System for Second Lieutenants: Operation “E”- Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Enhancement

Chapter 1

Introduction

The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) is an important institution to our country's safe keeping in that it prepares leaders, critical-thinking strategists, and technically competent military professionals for the USAF mission. USAFA is a military institution that provides a baccalaureate education to cadets as they are indoctrinated into the ways of the military. In addition, it is a large contributor to the pool of officers who enters the Air Force every year, providing nearly 1,000 exceptional new officers annually. Unfortunately, there is an emerging concern that newly graduated Second Lieutenants (2Lts) from USAFA are not being utilized in the most efficient manner.

The motivation for performing this research is based not only on the observations made of USAFA graduates diffusing into the Air Force and fulfilling a variety of jobs, but also on information derived from a variety of credible sources. Some graduates have gone directly to their specific form of training, and others have been put in what will be referred to in this paper as “interim” jobs. The term, interim, is used loosely to include a variety of situations, which will be addressed in detail later in the report. Indications are that the people who are sent directly to their training tend to feel more essential to the mission of the Air Force. Conversely, there is an rising opinion that those Lts in interim jobs for an extended period of time often feel unimportant and believe they are not being optimized. The unfortunate element of the situation is that the newly commissioned Lts from the Air Force Academy make up one of the most highly motivated groups in the Air Force. As cadets, these Lts prepared for nearly four years to enter

the Air Force and use their advanced military knowledge and leadership abilities. However, this motivation can quickly diminish when the outcome after four long years of hard work is to receive a job doing menial tasks of no perceived importance to our national security.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the current “first assignment” model by which USAFA Lts are deployed after graduation, and subsequently propose a re-designed model built on the experiences and perspectives held by USAFA graduates. The effectiveness of the first assignment is a serious issue for the Air Force because of the expenses and emergent consequences of a de-motivating experience. Some consequences that may occur include a decrease in retention of Air Force personnel (specifically USAFA graduates), ineffectiveness on the job, and negative impacts on the potential for success of USAFA graduates. For example, trends show that Air Force pilot retention is at 45%, which is a decrease from 87% in 1995 (Stanley, 2001). In addition, the retention for non-pilot operations has decreased 6% in the past year and is now at 51% (Stanley, 2001). These data suggest that the current assignment system for USAFA graduates should be looked at critically and changes should be suggested if appropriate.

Research Question

The research question that will guide this study is, what first assignment model would maximize the casual assignment experience for 2Lts?

Methodology

The methodological design for this study consisted of a two-stage research process. The first stage was a process of issues identification through the use of a questionnaire. The second

stage used the identified issues to evolve a theoretical model for an improved assignment system.

Stage I and Stage II are presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively.

Stage I

The methodology for Stage I (see Figure 1) of the research was a survey, which utilized an electronic questionnaire administered to a purposive sample of 125 USAFA graduates from the Class of 2000. Purposive samples are powerful strategies to gather data intended to describe a phenomenon and its attendant issues. The outcomes of purposive sample studies provide direction for larger statistical sample studies designed to test emergent hypotheses.

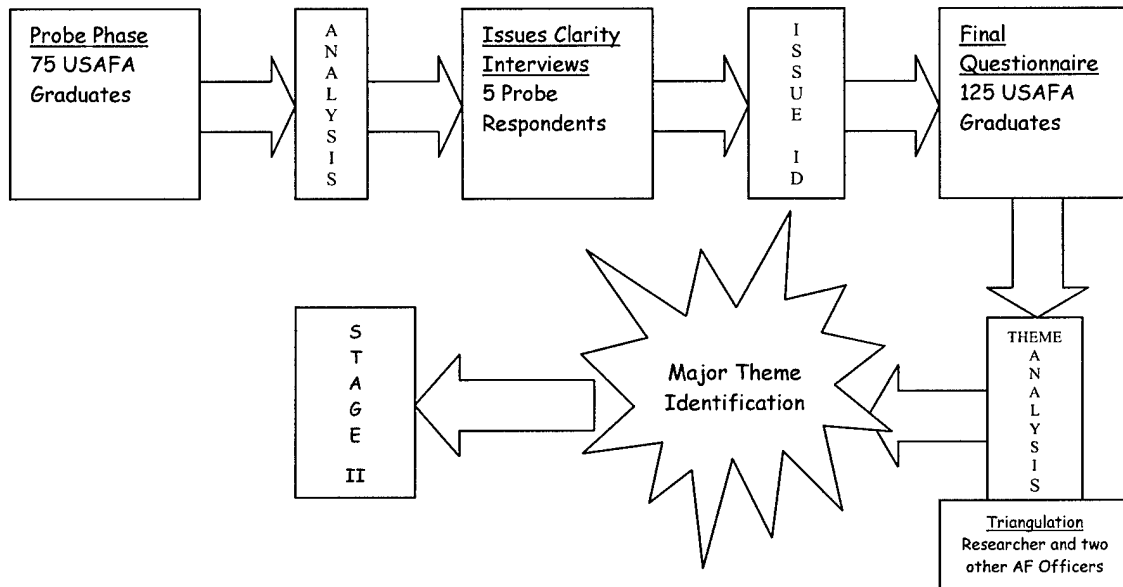


Figure 1. Methodology Stage I

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

The subjects for the study were chosen because they are the most recent AFA graduates to have been exposed to the current assignment system. In addition, economical and logistical constraints made it unreasonable to locate and poll the entire class of 926 people. However, the small sample in the study suggested some distinct trends and provided insights into the class of 2000 graduates' emerging opinions about the assignment process.

Development and Implementation

In order to pinpoint the relevant issues involved in the assignment process a probe questionnaire was first sent out to approximately 75 USAFA graduates from the Class of 2000. Once the responses were received and an initial review of the relevant issues was completed, five of the respondents were interviewed by telephone. During the interview, the researcher asked more detailed questions in order to create a final list of issues that would serve as a framework for developing the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Based on the issues that emerged from the interviews, a questionnaire with four, two-part questions was created. The questionnaire was then sent via electronic mail to approximately 125 USAFA graduates. A portion of the probe population was included in this population. The Lt's polled represented several career fields, including Aircraft Maintenance, Intelligence, Office of Special Investigation, and Pilots. Once the responses were received, the data were analyzed through a process of thematic analysis and triangulation. Themes identified through the final questionnaire are included in Appendix B. Though this research does not accurately portray the opinions of the entire graduating class of 2000, it creates an emergent picture of what may be the feelings of many USAFA graduates regarding the opportunities afforded by their interim assignment. In addition, the data suggested areas for further research.

Stage II

Stage II of the research process was to create a theoretical model based on the emergent themes from the questionnaire that would address the negative themes and enhance the positive themes. Once the model was created, it was submitted to two Air Force line officers (a Captain and a Major) for review. Both individuals have worked directly with the current assignment

system either presently or in the past. Based on the reviewers positive feedback, the model required no revisions. A flow chart of Stage II is depicted in the Figure 2 below.

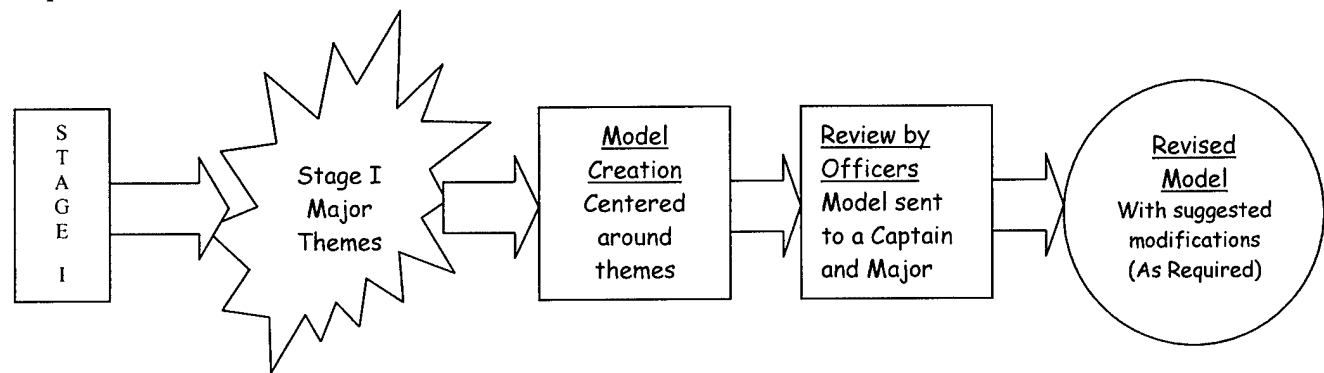


Figure 2. Methodology Stage II

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

Chapter 2

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the background of the current assignment system, which explains the entire process and will highlight several problem areas. Next, a detailed explanation of an “interim duty” assignment and how its prevalence complicates the assignment system for USAFA graduates is discussed. Finally, data from questionnaires of 36 USAFA graduates will be presented and common themes will be examined.

Background

To fully understand the nature of the problem being addressed one must understand the assignment system to determine which variables need to be manipulated to create a more efficient system. With this information, it is then possible to take a closer look at the problematic issues involved in the current system.

Every year at the end of May, approximately 1,000 cadets become commissioned 2Lts in the U.S. Air Force and graduate with a Bachelor’s degree from USAFA. By the end of the summer (approximately 1 August), each of these new Lts must be placed in a job. Many of them go directly into training for a position that matches their career field, or Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). Each AFSC has a specific training program whose mission is to teach new Lts the skills they need to succeed in their specialty. The training schools vary in length from 6 weeks to 9 months depending on the subject matter. Other graduates go directly to undergraduate pilot training (UPT) or to some other special assignment, such as to the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) program, where officers attend a Master’s program at a civilian university.

The capacity of the Air Force’s training programs allow for the training of a relatively small number of the assigned USAFA graduates at one time. In addition, USAFA graduates use

these training facilities along with both Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Officer Training School (OTS) commissioned officers, which adds to the scheduling access dilemma. Consequently, there is a continual backup of Lts waiting to engage in training programs.

Those who must wait for a training billet to be available are assigned to various other bases and units around the world on a temporary or interim basis. Many new officers find themselves assigned to interim duty in a unit that has no vital need for them. Frequently, they end up doing busy work, or tasks below their skill level. Activities such as taking messages, running copies, and doing other menial tasks that could easily be completed in their absence fill their duty day.

Interim Duty. As previously mentioned, the term interim is being used as a broad reference to several different temporary assignments. For example, Lts who are slated to go to pilot or navigator training, otherwise known as “rated” personnel, are often put on “casual” status at a base until their training start date. They can be placed in any type of career field for their casual period, regardless of whether or not it correlates to their educational background, personal interests, or to flying. Similar situations can also occur in “non-rated” career fields. Non-rated refers to career fields that exist to support rated personnel. A few examples of non-rated fields that are affected by interim duties are Aircraft Maintenance, Communications, Intelligence, Air Battle Management, and Space and Missiles.

Like rated Lts, those in non-rated fields may also be placed on casual status, in a job unrelated to their AFSC. In other situations, non-rated Lts are placed in a functional assignment right away; however, they are recognized as incapable of performing their job with full responsibility until they have received training. All of these situations are called interim jobs

because in each situation, a Lt is still awaiting the vital training that is required for him or her to begin performing AFSC-specific duties.

Interim duty may range from a few weeks to well over a year (15 months), while personnel wait their turn for training (S. A. Nipper, personal communication, January 12, 2001). Often times, these interim duties are not vital to the unit or to the mission of the Air Force. Instead, the Lt is used as a jack-of-all-trades doing anything other employees need to have done. With this kind of process, these highly educated Lts can be left with virtually nothing to do, or doing what individuals describe as “non-meaningful work.”

The literature on non-meaningful work describes an outcome of such experiences as unsatisfying and resulting in cynical attitudes (“Employee Involvement is the Key,” 2001). Lts, in fact, regularly display cynical attitudes about the way the Air Force is using them in their interim duty assignments. If, as postulated, the USAFA graduates are “the best and brightest” of their generation, how effective can assignments that require no more than a high school diploma be at maintaining motivation and military pride in oneself and the Air Force mission? This is a question the Air Force is becoming concerned with in order to achieve maximum efficiency.

It is important to note that Lts do not *always* receive boring, non-meaningful jobs. There are other situations, when a new Lt will be given a job that is normally done by someone further up the chain of command and of superior rank, such as an executive position. In this case, the Lt is stretched to the limits as he or she is given an increased workload and increased responsibility without having any prior experience to rely on for support. In a sense, this kind of position produces Lts with “value-added” qualities. They gain experience and greater insights into how the Air Force works, which adds to their already diverse academic background. In comparison with the Lt pouring coffee and running off copies, the Lt in the latter example is worth much

more to the Air Force. Regrettably, these successes are less frequently communicated than those that are perceived as boring and meaningless by the new officers.

In the Air Force the problem of inefficient interim duties may not be unique to the Air Force Academy. In the past, ROTC graduates were not commissioned onto active duty in the Air Force until there was an assignment available in their specific field. However, this system changed in 1996 and now ROTC cadets are commissioned at nearly the same time and in much the same manner as USAFA graduates (N. Golden, personal communication, January 10, 2001).

The principle reason for the change was the fact that ROTC graduates were having an especially difficult time finding employment during the period between graduation from the ROTC program and their commissioning onto active duty (N. Golden, personal communication, January 10, 2001). This difficulty existed because employers were not comfortable with the fact that at any moment these individuals would have to quit their jobs to fulfill their Air Force commission obligation. Employer reluctance was based primarily in the economic reality that individuals would not work long enough to make it worth the effort and money to hire and train them.

Another reason for the change in the ROTC assignment system was because the Air Force determined superiority among equally ranked officers by their date of commissioning. Since ROTC graduates were not being commissioned at graduation, like USAFA graduates, they were at a disadvantage for promotions later on in their careers (N. Golden, personal communication, January 10, 2001).

Changing the ROTC first assignment system to the USAFA first assignment system model has added significantly to the backup of Lts at training facilities. Thus, the criticality of

taking a serious look at the current assignment system for 2Lts and how it can be improved becomes evident.

Current Model. The following model (see Figure 3) represents the present “first assignment” system for USAFA graduates:

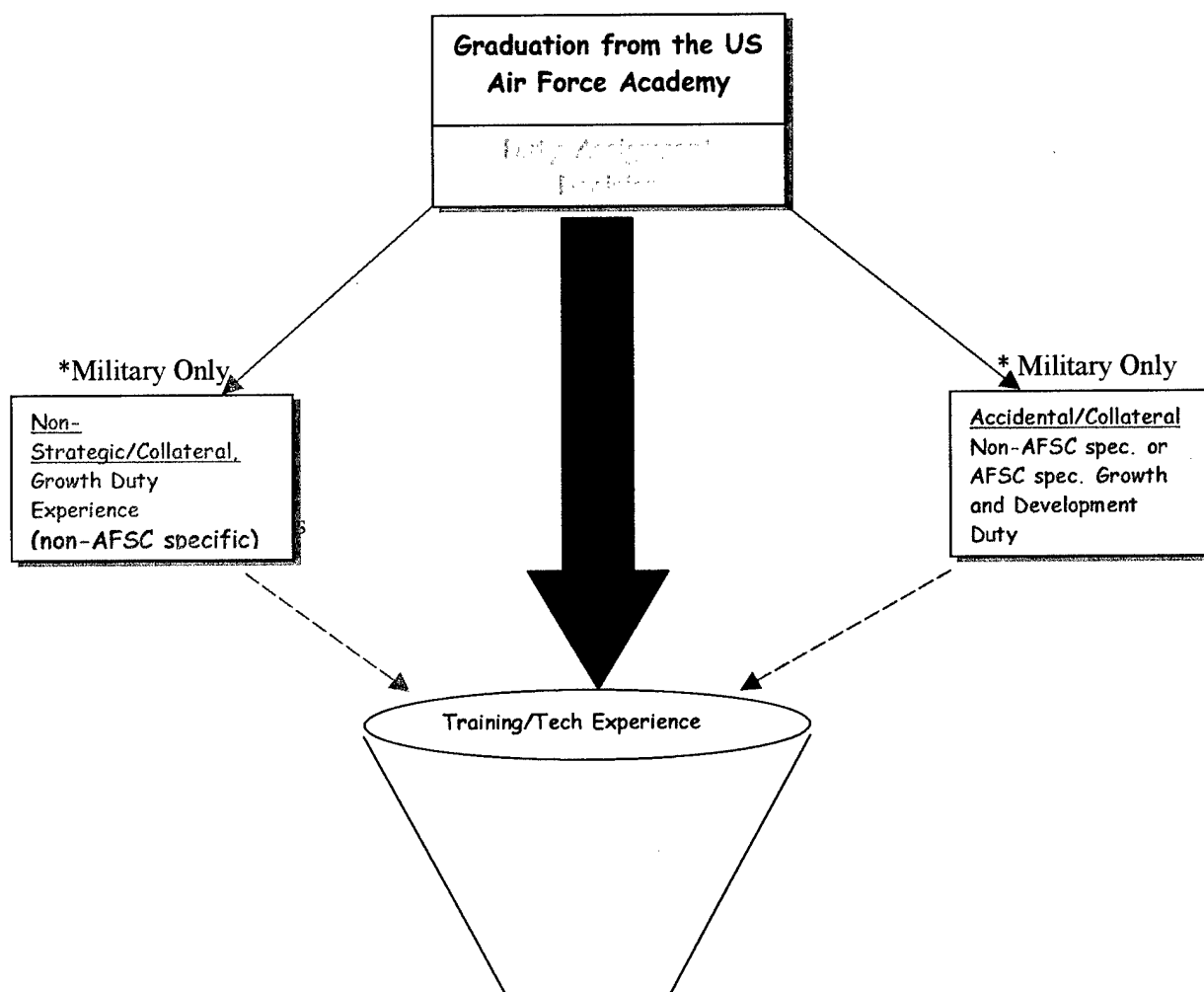


Figure 3. Current Assignment System for USAFA Graduates

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

The assignment process begins well before graduation when 4th year cadets pick either a rated or non-rated career path. The exact career field, or AFSC, and base location are determined by a cadet’s personal career preferences, class ranking at graduation, and the needs of

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January 10, 2001). The longest wait ranges between 12-14 months after commissioning (D. Miller, personal communication, January 10, 2001).

The green arrow pointing diagonally to the left track represents the graduates who are placed into Non-Strategic/Collateral, Non-AFSC Specific duty experiences. In other words, the left box represents jobs such as being a messenger, snack provider or copy runner, where little mental stimulation or responsibility is required for a particular job.

Finally, the red arrow pointing to the right track represents graduates who are assigned to Accidental/Collateral (Non-AFSC Specific or AFSC Specific) growth and development duty assignments. An example is a USAFA graduate who is assigned to an executive position in a flying squadron, which is a job normally carried out by someone with higher rank than a 2Lt. In this case, the Lt assigned to the job would be challenged on a daily basis to gain a vast amount of knowledge and experience in order to succeed in the position. However, it is merely by chance that the job a Lt gets is a challenging and rewarding one, which is why this route is termed "accidental." In all three tracks, the jobs that are available to USAFA graduates are limited strictly to military assignments. This is noted on the model by an asterisk.

In the Air Force, the mission is to protect the lives of Americans, which makes activity and fiscal efficiency as well as effectiveness essential. To that end, the Air Force attempts to get the maximum output from each service member while trying to maximize economic efficiencies. However, the question arises as to whether or not this is the case with the current USAFA assignment system?

Could a better system greatly improve the efficiency of the assignment process? If yes, how would the current system be modified or what would an entirely new system look like? It is not feasible to put all 1,000 USAFA graduates through the training process at one time. The

training schools are not capable of handling such large numbers of trainees, and it would cost too much to expand the schools to that capacity (S. A. Nipper, personal communication, January 12, 2001). Therefore, a new system would need to provide a way for those Lts who do not directly enter the training pipeline to be more useful and productive to the Air Force while they wait. In order to get a better feel for exactly what changes might accomplish greater efficiency in the current USAFA assignment system, a closer look at what issues are perceived to exist is required. In order to do that, inquiry must specifically target the affected population: Lts who graduated from USAFA.

Data Discussion

In order to obtain data regarding Lts' opinions of the USAFA assignment system, 125 graduates from the USAFA Class of 2000 were surveyed by an electronic mail questionnaire. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, a probe questionnaire was sent by electronic mail to 75 USAFA graduates. The participants' contact information (email address) was obtained from an official class website, USAFA2000.com and through personal contacts. From the probe, 31 acceptable questionnaires were completed and sent back to the researcher. Upon the return of the probe questionnaires, five of the respondents were then interviewed by telephone for a more in-depth understanding of the issues. From the interviews, the following concerns emerged regarding the interim assignments resulting from the Air Force Assignment System. These became the foundation for the final survey and they are listed in Table 1.

Using these themes as a foundation, a set of open-ended survey questions was developed. The questions were intended to produce data that would confirm or not confirm these themes.

Table 1

Major Themes Obtained Through Personal Interviews

<u>Major Themes about Interim Duty from Personal Interviews</u>
1) Ineffective use of time (Effectiveness issue)
2) Underutilization of skills (Efficiency issue)
3) Dichotomy of difficulty, responsibility, meaning and satisfaction (Enhancement issue)
4) Anxiety and frustration about delay to training or AFSC-specific job (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Enhancement issue)

The same method of distribution (electronic mail) was used to distribute the formal questionnaires to the 125 members of the USAFA Class of 2000. There was a response from 36 of the individuals surveyed. Of the 36 questionnaire respondents, eight of them (22.2%) were also in the original probe group. An asterisk next to their Individual Number on Appendix C denotes these respondents.

Data Gathering. The questionnaire consisted of four questions that inquired about 1) Lts' overall satisfaction level with their interim duty, 2) the extent to which their interim assignment was positive or negative, 3) the events that lead to their positive or negative assessment, and 4) any recommendations to improve the current USAFA assignment system (see Appendix D).

The majority (78%) of the responses were from Lts who were awaiting pilot training (APT). Therefore, the data most accurately portrays the opinions of Lts who are on track to becoming pilots. However, there were several non-rated AFSCs represented in the survey as well. They included Aircraft Maintenance (21A1), Intelligence (14N1), Communications (33S1), and the Office of Special Investigation (71S1). In addition to the four questions that were included in the survey, Lts were also asked to include demographic information about their

gender, AFSC, and length of interim assignment. The questionnaire respondents consisted of mostly males; however, 13.8% were female and 60% of the females were also non-rated, which adds to the diversity of the sample population. Finally, 25% of Lts surveyed had an interim duty of 6 months or less, and the other 75% were completing an interim assignment of greater than 6 months. The longest interim duty length in the sample population was 14 months. A summary of all demographic information on the sample population is included in Appendix C as well.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis. The following (see Table 2) is an example of how the data gathered from the 36 respondents from the USAFA Class of 2000 were summarized. A thematic analysis was performed on participants' statements in regard to their interim duty and themes were identified. Each theme was coded and a tally was kept for each one. This process was repeated for each question on the questionnaire. The entire questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix D. They were recorded in the same fashion as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Example Table of Themes and Demographic Information on a Sample of USAFA Class of 2000 for Question 2a- What positive experiences have you had while on casual status?

Individual Number	1	2*	3	4*	5	6	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	
Q#2a Theme Number	→	→	→	→	→	→	Total
1	1	1			1		3
2	1		1				2
3	1				1		2
↓							
n							

An individual number was given to each questionnaire respondent in order to keep the respondents' identities confidential. In addition, demographic information was also listed with

the individual number. Specifically, the demographic information included the respondent's gender, AFSC, and length (in months) of interim duty. This information is displayed across the top four rows of the table. Next, specific themes in each response were recorded. Each theme was also replaced by a number, which can be seen in the far left column. Each of the themes corresponds to a theme number in Table 3 (see below). A tally for the frequency of each theme was also recorded. The final tally for each theme is displayed in the 'Total' column. This table was used to identify which themes were mentioned most frequently in order to summarize them into major themes.

Table 3

Example Table of Themes for Survey Question 2a

<u>Q#2a Theme Number</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1	What I'm doing is making a difference	III
2	Good transition from cadet to officer	II
3	Chance to interact with higher ranking officers	II
4	Learned a lot about the flying world (how it operates)	VIII
5	I got to fly a lot	X
6	I've learned a lot about my job	VI
7	I've gotten to work with officers and enlisted	VI
↓		
↓		
n		

Table 3 is an example list of themes for Question 2a. Each theme is listed in the 'Theme' column. In addition, the column 'Q#2a Theme Number' denotes the corresponding number for each theme for Question 2a. These theme numbers match the numbers listed in Table 2 (see above) in the column 'Q#2a Theme Number.' Finally, the 'Frequency' column expresses how many times each theme was mentioned by the questionnaire respondents. The numbers in the

'Frequency' column are identical to the theme frequencies in the 'Total' column in Table 2 (see above) as well.

Once the tallying process was completed, the results for each question were subjected to a triangulation process in order to summarize the responses for each question into major themes. The triangulation process involved the researcher (a 2Lt), and two other Air Force officers. The other two officers hold the rank of Captain and Major and have 8 and 16 years of experience in the Air Force, respectively. In addition, the group of three displayed diversity in terms of gender and race, consisting of two females, and one African-American. The Captain and Major were asked to participate in the triangulation process because of their age, gender, rank, longevity and experience with the Air Force and the assignment process. It was determined that by using a combination of the researcher and two other officers instead of solely the researcher, a more valid list of themes could be achieved. Each officer proceeded to summarize the themes for each part of the four questions into four major themes. The resulting 16 themes were then compared and the most common themes from each of the three officers were used to create the final list of major themes (see Appendix E).

Discussion. The results indicate that the majority of USAFA respondents felt their interim experience was positive and beneficial. Of 36 respondents, 29 (82.8%) answered that their interim experience was positive and beneficial, 3 (8.6%) responded that it was positive but not beneficial, 2 (5.7%) said it was negative and beneficial and 1 Lt (2.8%) said it was negative and not beneficial. These results are referenced in Appendix C. The results are interesting because an overwhelming majority (82.8%) responded that their interim duty was both positive and beneficial, yet of those, 76% gave an answer for at least one part of Question 3, which addressed the negative aspects of interim duty.

The second question on the questionnaire consisted of two parts. The subjects respectively addressed positive experiences while on an interim duty, and the impacts these experiences had on the respondent. The major themes that emerged regarding positive experiences are as listed in Table 4.

The first major theme that emerged for the first part of Question 2 regarding the sample's positive experiences was that Lts are learning about and appreciating the operational Air Force. Some examples of statements made by USAFA graduates were "I have learned about the 'real' Air Force," "I've learned a lot about my job," and "I have gained experience working with Air Force personnel." These statements suggest that some Lts are gaining useful job knowledge while on interim duty.

The second theme that emerged was that Lts are receiving a lot of experience and information about flying. Again, it is important to note that 78% of the respondents were rated officers, which may have skewed the data slightly towards pilot concerns. However, many Lts mentioned that they are getting experience in the cockpit of different aircraft and as a result they are learning a great deal.

Table 4

Major Themes Obtained from Survey Question 2a

<u>Major Themes (Question 2a)</u>
1) 2Lts are learning about and appreciating the operational AF
2) 2Lts are learning job skills and professional awareness
3) 2Lts are experiencing a positive transition from USAFA to the AF
4) 2Lts feel good about the influence they are having

Next, Lts said they are discovering that their interim assignment is a positive transition period that allows for personal growth. Statements such as, “This is a good transition from cadet to officer,” “I like being on my own,” and “I have lots of responsibility and freedom” all support the aforementioned theme. USAFA graduates’ first assignment is their first time to experience life on their own in the “real world” and the responsibilities that follow, thus, these comments reflect this transition in their lives.

Finally, the responses showed that Lts feel good about the influence their jobs have in the Air Force. Lts were quoted as saying, “What I am doing is making a difference,” and “My job has helped the base.” The previous two statements are the positive testimonies the USAF would like to hear from every officer, however, as is discussed in the subsequent dialogue, this is not always the case. Based on these data, many positive experiences are occurring for Lts on interim duties. Next, the impact positive experiences have on Lts will be explored.

It is encouraging to note that there were direct links between Lts positive experiences and the subsequent results in Lts view of the Air Force, skill development, and overall happiness. This is based on the consistency of answers for Question 2a and 2b. For example, one theme for Question 2a was that 2Lts are learning job skills and professional awareness. Subsequently, in Question 2b, 2Lts stated that their interim time has helped them make and reinforce career decisions. Therefore, positive experiences on interim assignments are resulting in positive impacts on 2Lts. The major themes for Question 2b are listed below (see Table 5).

First, Lts expressed that interim duty had given them a chance to develop interpersonal skills with both officer and enlisted Air Force personnel. It was commonly mentioned that a new appreciation for both groups came as a result of experiences while on interim duty.

Next, along with working with diverse groups, Lts stressed that they are able to develop skills and gain experience during an interim assignment. Rated officers get a chance to learn about and appreciate the non-rated career fields that work to support pilots. Meanwhile, non-rated officers gain on-the-job experience in their career field before they receive formal training specific to their AFSC. On the questionnaire, rated Lts frequently mentioned that their interim duties allowed them to learn more about life as a pilot and provided them with opportunities to get experience in the cockpit of many different types of aircraft.

The third theme that emerged was that the practical experience gained while on interim duty helped many Lts make career decisions for the future. Specifically, rated officers mentioned that they became more informed about the benefits and drawbacks of the different types of airframes.

Table 5

Major Themes Obtained from Survey Question 2b

<u>Major Themes (Question 2b)</u>
1) 2Lts appreciate working with AF personnel
2) 2Lts are developing skills and knowledge for their future AF career
3) 2Lts' casual status has helped make and reinforce career decisions
4) 2Lts are gaining a broader perspective of officership

The last positive theme that stood out for this survey question was that Lts are gaining a broader perspective of officership in the operational Air Force. Some comments that supported this theme were "It [interim duty] allowed me to focus on officership," "It motivated me to be a

better officer,” and “It gave me a broader sense of leadership.” Unfortunately, the results of the survey proved that Lts experiences and their subsequent impacts are not always this positive.

As it was mentioned previously, even though most Lts rated their interim experience as a positive and beneficial one, overall, there were also many reoccurring themes about negative experiences. The four negative themes for Question 3a are summarized in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Major Themes Obtained from Survey Question 3a

<u>Major Themes (Question 3a)</u>
1) Lts feel they don't have the necessary skills/abilities to perform their interim job
2) Jobs are not challenging and are often below the skill/ability levels of 2Lts
3) Casual jobs are not making an efficient use of 2Lts' time
4) Length (too long) and location of assignments create a lack of motivation.

The first major theme that Lts stressed was that they did not have adequate skills and abilities to perform the required tasks needed for their job. Several Lts said, “I lack knowledge and technical skills required for my job,” and “USAFA provided us with too little training on forms, ratings, etc.”

On the opposite side of the spectrum, other trends in the responses suggested that Lts are being placed in jobs below their skill level, and consequently, they suffer from boredom and a feeling of being under-challenged. The questionnaire results imply that Lts' interim duties can vary greatly in terms of difficulty and satisfaction. Some Lts find they lack the knowledge needed for their job and others find their job consisting of menial tasks that are well below their

skill level. Thus, the data indicate that the current assignment system for 2Lts may result in inefficient utilization of these newly graduated officers.

The third major theme was that Lts feel their time is not being used in an efficient manner while on interim status. Lts said, “I have to find ways to stay busy,” “I feel like I’m wasting time,” “I could not learn my job because it kept changing.” This theme reoccurred throughout the entire study. The frequency of expressed concern suggests that this is an area that should be given special consideration when making improvements to the current assignment system.

Another emergent theme suggested that Lts feel the length of their interim duty is too long. Of the Lts who replied to the survey, the length of interim duties ranged anywhere from one to 14 months. Thus, graduates who enter pilot training one month after graduation have over one year of seniority, experience, and knowledge, compared to their classmate who must wait for training for 14 months.

When the participants were asked to state which factors contributed to their negative experiences while on interim duty, they reiterated many of the same points that were stated in the first half of Question 3. The following are the most common trends in participants’ responses.

Table 7

Major Themes Obtained from Survey Question 3b

<u>Major Themes (Question 3b)</u>
1) Casual jobs are not making an efficient use of 2Lts’ time
2) 2Lts feel that their USAFA degrees are irrelevant to their job requirements
3) The wait for training is too long
4) 2Lts are experiencing frustration with the location and circumstances of jobs

One major theme that emerged, and was identical to a theme for Question 3a, was that Lts' time is not being used efficiently while on interim duty. Several comments that supported this view were "They don't know what to do with me," and "I am wasting time in the squadron when I could do other things." Again, the regularity of this theme is important to keep in mind.

Another major theme was that 2Lts feel that their USAFA education is irrelevant to their interim duties. Unfortunately, USAFA graduates are not placed into interim assignments based on their educational background. Currently, Lts leaving the Academy choose their first assignment on a rank-ordered system. Therefore, those ranked at the top of the class get their first choice of AFSC. However, for the others it comes down to what bases and positions are left when it is their turn to choose. Thus, many Lts are given duties that have nothing to do with their preference or educational background.

Thirdly, Lts stressed that the length of their interim assignment was too long, and it created an exasperating work environment. An under-challenged Lt said, "I was only assigned one odd job in 2.5 weeks." Yet, another Lt with a very challenging job, said nearly the exact opposite when he stated, "I do more work than Captains and Majors in my unit." Again, this reinforces the fact that there is a dichotomy of duties required of Lts on interim duties.

Finally, many Lts also stated that they experienced frustration with their interim assignments. This can be attributed to several factors. One possible explanation is the previously mentioned feeling Lts have that their education at USAFA was irrelevant to their interim duty. In addition, many Lts get married immediately after graduation from USAFA. Unfortunately, if their spouse is also a military member, often times they are unable to live together because of scheduling policies. These reasons are just a few that may contribute to Lts' frustrations with their assignments.

When asked to suggest improvements for the Assignment System, the sample population had many useful recommendations. The three most common suggestions are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Major Themes Obtained from Survey Question 4a

<u>Major Themes (Question 4a)</u>	
1)	Provide more/faster training
2)	Provide meaningful work for 2Lts
3)	Provide more guidance on casual job expectations and requirements

The first common suggestion for improvement to the USAFA assignment system was to speed up the training pipeline in order to get rated Lts mission ready and into UPT bases faster. Lts suggested either creating more training slots, or creating more UPT bases in order to speed up the assignment process. It was evident from the survey responses that Lts would rather spend their time in a training program than on an interim assignment. One complaint stated that traditionally, Lts from a successive graduating class (e.g., Class of 2001) can begin obtaining slots at UPT before the last Lts from the previous class (e.g., Class of 2000) have been admitted. A rated Lt does not begin fulfilling their 10-year commitment to the Air Force until they have completed the UPT program. Therefore, the speed of entry into the training program is of the utmost importance to individuals.

Another repeated recommendation for improvement was to provide meaningful jobs for casual Lts. The reasons Lts feel this lack of meaning might be attributed to several factors. One explanation is that interim duties are not relevant to Lts' educational and personal interests, which causes a sense of apathy towards a job. Another reason Lts might feel their jobs are

meaningless is because they are assigned to a unit for such a short period of time, they may not be afforded enough autonomy and responsibility to make the job meaningful. Instead, they are tasked with menial tasks in order to stay busy.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to identify criteria for a meaningful job. A job that has meaning to one person may be virtually meaningless to the next. However, in this case, it seems reasonable to say that Lts find meaning when they feel that their job is challenging, productive, and makes a difference towards the mission of the Air Force.

The third and final common suggestion made by Lts was to give more guidance about interim duty expectations. Clearly stating job expectations and requirements may also add meaning to interim jobs because they would allow Lts to measure their performance based on the job requirements. For example, if a Lt is only expected to work four hours a day, yet this requirement is never formally articulated, it is likely the Lt will fulfill the norm of being in the office for eight hours per day. This amounts to four hours of completely wasted time. This scenario is bound to create cynicism and a loss of meaning for work. However, with clearer expectations, Lts may find more meaning in their job.

How will these suggested changes improve the system? The sample population was asked to justify their recommendations for improving to the assignment system by explaining how their proposed changes could benefit USAFA graduates in the future. The following are the major themes that emerged from their responses (see Table 9).

The Lts surveyed felt that giving Lts shorter assignments and providing better skills preparation would increase morale. Likewise, they said that increased job satisfaction would lead to job success and better productivity. Finally, Lts stressed that they want more control over their current and future assignments in the Air Force. The responses to the questionnaire can

thus be summarized in a few words. Lts want their interim duty to be succinct, meaningful, within their range of skills and abilities, and in an area of interest.

Table 9

Major Themes Obtained from Survey Question 4b

<u>Major Themes- Question 4b</u>	
1)	Job satisfaction will lead to job success
2)	Shorter assignments will increase morale
3)	2Lts will be better prepared for their jobs after USAFA
4)	Lts will have more control over their career choices/assignments

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that the data steadily supported the major themes that were identified through personal interviews with original probe respondents. The interviews suggested that Lts are concerned about 1) an ineffective use of their time, 2) an underutilization of their skills, 3) the dichotomy of difficulty, meaning, and satisfaction with interim jobs, and 4) the delay that exists before training or an AFSC-specific job. Respondents consistently reported having experienced some or all of these four items, which suggests that USAFA Lts are having similar experiences on interim duty. The data also indicates that there is significant room for improvement in the current assignment system. The respondents acknowledged that changing the assignment system to address these four concerns would increase job preparation, morale, job performance, and perceived control over career choices. The model in the following chapter presents a system that attempts to deal with Lts' expressed concerns.

Chapter 3

Proposed Model

The following model (see Figure 4) represents a modified “first assignment” system. It presents three different track alternatives for USAFA graduates. Though the basic goals of the assignment system have remained the same as those of the current system, several career options have been added to the model in an attempt to more efficiently deal with the large number of graduates pending their training programs.

Track I. The first track (purple arrow) is a direct entrance into the training process. (This is the same as the current model.) Again, on this track new Lts would go directly to a base and be trained in their AFSC. Upon completion, they would immediately be placed in a position that is specific to their AFSC.

Track II. The second track, called the Strategic Collateral track, (red arrow pointing diagonally to the right) would allow the Air Force and new Lts four scenarios to choose from after graduation. According to an Air Force Quality of Life Survey conducted in 2000, less than half (46%) of officers are satisfied with off-duty educational opportunities at their current duty location (Air Force Survey Branch, 2000). Based on this notion, the first scenario (see Figure 5) in the Strategic Collateral track is to take a leave of absence from the Air Force until the commencement of their training.

In the first scenario, officers would relinquish all Air Force responsibility and live as a civilian for an allotted amount of time. During this time, they would be required to either gain employment or receive educational services, or both. By exercising this option, Lts would be able to make use of their waiting period by applying themselves to the high academic standards and work ethic that were enforced at USAFA. Similar to the current Air Force Institute of

Technology (AFIT) system, where graduates are sent to a civilian educational institution for one to two years to obtain a Master's or Doctoral degree, Lts who decide to obtain higher education would fall under the auspices of the nearest ROTC detachment or Active Duty Base. The conceptual basis for this track is that by obtaining a civilian job or attending school, Lts can bring back enhanced and/or new skills to the Air Force from the civilian world *and* maintain a high level of work ethic and mental stimulation. Currently, the Air Force sponsors a similar program called Education with Industry (EWI). In this program, Air Force officers are released to work for civilian corporations for an allotted amount of time. However, the EWI program is typically only available to officers with the rank of Captain or higher.

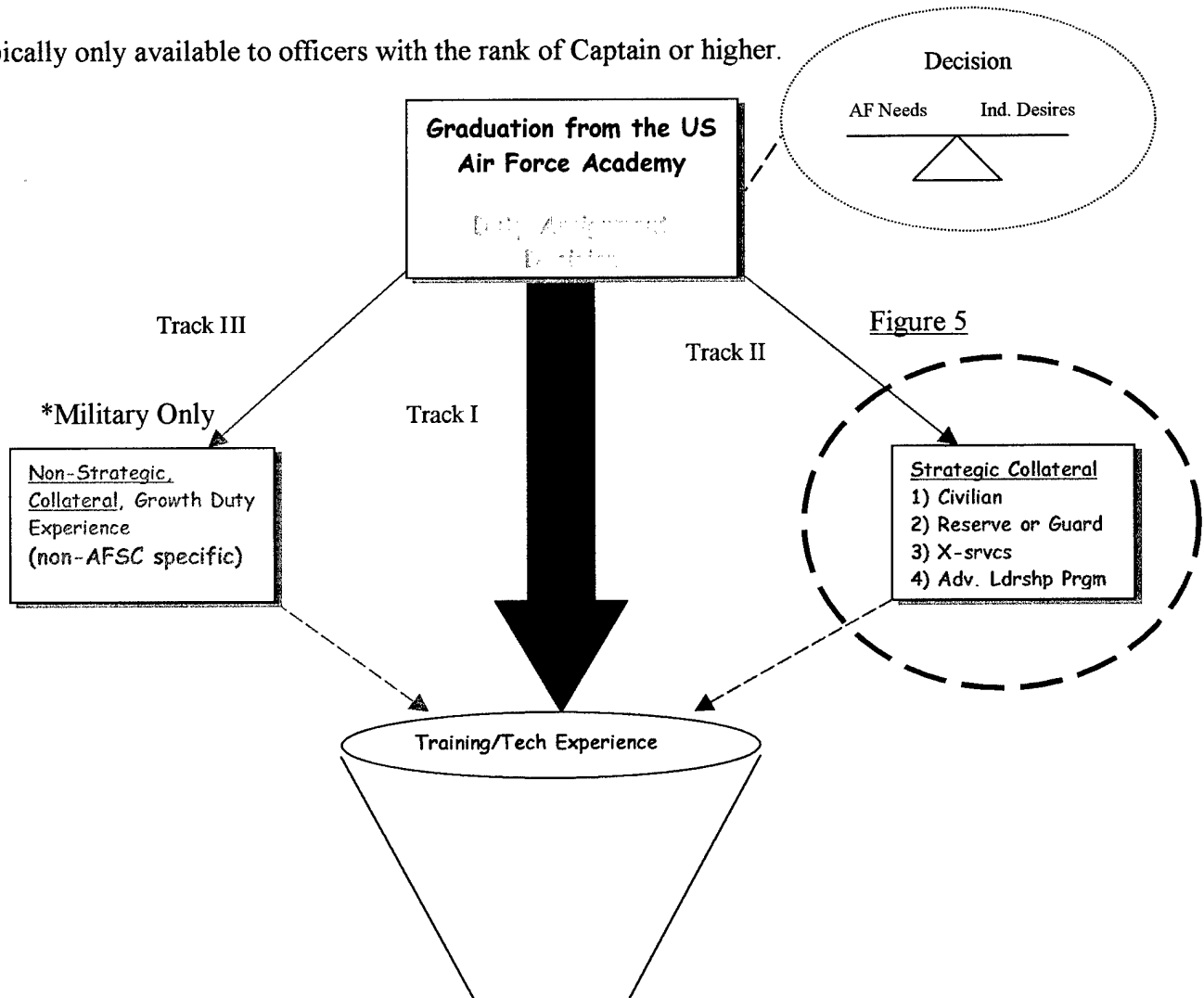


Figure 4. Proposed Assignment System for USAFA Graduates

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

The logistics of pay and commitment are important factors to consider for the proposed assignment system. One option is to use the same compensation and commitment standards that are applied to officers obtaining an education through the AFIT program. Using these standards, officers would be required to serve an additional three years in the Air Force for every one year of education obtained. Another option would be to use the standards used for Lts who attend medical school. With this option, graduates would go on Reserve status and receive ½ of a 2Lt's salary for the duration of their leave of absence. However, if there were not enough motivation for this track with the aforementioned systems of compensation, a more appropriate system of pay and commitment could be created.

In the second scenario in the 2nd track newly commissioned Lts would be assigned to Reserve and National Guard units. Lts could choose this option, which is similar to the previous choice, except that they would not have a civilian experience, rather, they would have a Reserve or Guard experience. While acting on Reserve status, they would eliminate the need for the current Reservists, which again would save the Air Force a large sum of money. In addition, they would gain valuable experience by dealing with their AFSC firsthand, yet they would be working in a setting where there is less of a backup and more opportunity to gain familiarity with the Air Force. Again, the issues of compensation and commitment would have to be seriously considered in this scenario.

The third scenario in this track is to serve and gain experience in another branch of the United States Military. Spending time with the Army, Navy, Marines, or Coast Guard would give a new Lt a broader perspective of the military and the opportunity to learn how the different branches work together to provide our country its protection. It would also indoctrinate Lts in the protocol of being an officer in the military and the behavior and responsibilities that accompany

that title. Finally, a cross-service assignment would provide Lts with opportunities to meet people and familiarize themselves with personnel and units that may be important assets to joint-operations in the future.

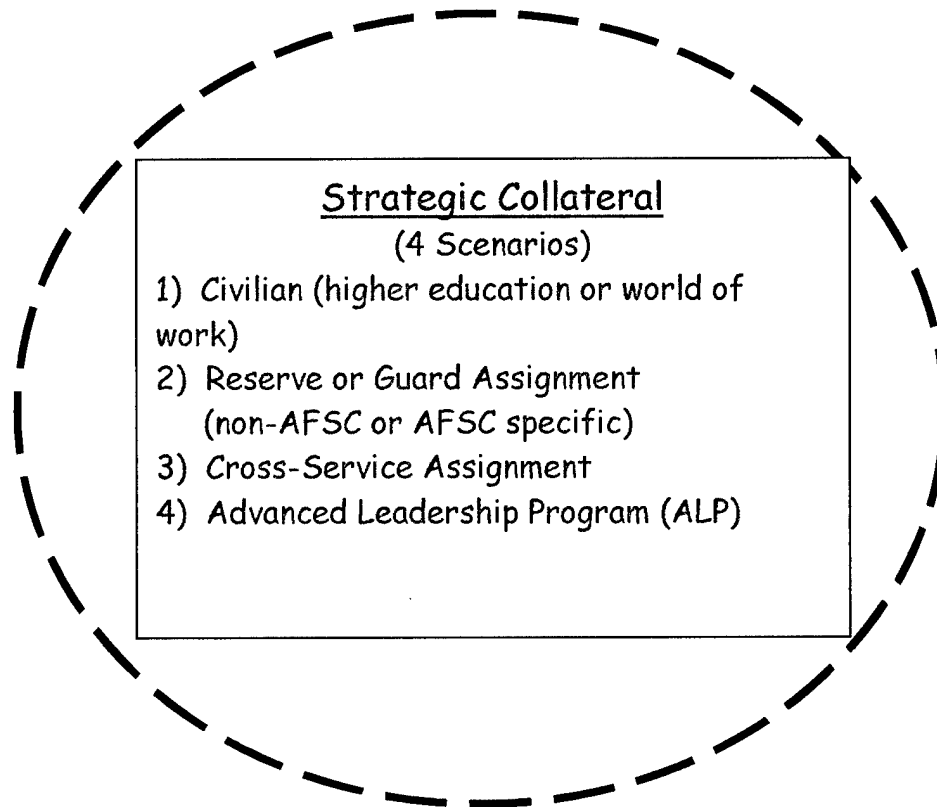


Figure 5. Strategic Collateral Track in Proposed Model

(Engh & Geroy, 2001)

The final scenario in the 2nd track is to go into the *Advanced Leadership Program (ALP)*. This program would provide Lts who have 1) a significant amount of “interim” time and 2) who have performed exceptionally well at USAFA, with the opportunity to be placed into a challenging position that would typically never be filled by a new officer. Individual base commanders would provide job opportunities for the ALP as the positions became vacant. For instance, imagine a scenario where a Captain in the Aircraft Maintenance field was recently notified she would be moving overseas. Due to the fact that the relocation was unexpected, the

position could be vacant for up to six months until the next qualified Captain can fill the position. Therefore, the Captain's supervisor could make the position available for an ALP Lt to fill. With supervision (because of a lack of previous experience), the Lt could gain experience and knowledge about the job. After six months on the job, the Lt would then leave for his or her AFSC-specific training having gained skills and having served the Air Force by doing meaningful, challenging work. This program would not only help develop officers in an efficient manner, it would also help in creating a pool of extraordinary officers who could be used to make a succession plan for certain areas of the Air Force.

Track III. Lastly, the 3rd track, or Non-Strategic Collateral track, is comprised of the group of graduates who may be placed in jobs that do or do not directly correlate with their skills, and who are or are not challenged. However, by removing a large number of graduates and offering them opportunities in the civilian world, National Guard and Reserve units, as well as in other U. S. Military branches, there would be significantly fewer people in this group than at the present time, which reduces the risk of inefficient utilization.

Similar to the current system, the track Lts end up on in the proposed model will have everything to do with their all-around performance at USAFA. Those who are top performers will be allowed the first choice, the next highest performers after that and so on. Thus, good performance is rewarded with the choice of which direction to go after graduation. If getting directly to pilot training is of the utmost importance to a Lt, and he or she has performed well at USAFA, the opportunity to fly will be available. On the other hand, if obtaining a Master's degree and taking a break from life in the Air Force is a Lt's desire, then that choice could be honored as well. However, as it is in the current model, the lower the class rank at graduation, the harder it would be for a Lt to get his or her track preference.

To summarize, the proposed model attempts to address each of the major concerns that was expressed by USAFA graduates in this study. Once again the four major theme issues regarding effectiveness, efficiency, and enhancement that emerged were:

- 1) Ineffective use of time
- 2) Underutilization of skills
- 3) Dichotomy of difficulty, meaning, and satisfaction in interim duties
- 4) Anxiety and frustration based on the extended wait for training or AFSC-specific jobs

The following chart explains how the proposed model addresses each of these four areas.

Table 10

Table of How Theme Issues Are Addressed by the Proposed Model

Issue	Track	How Theme Issue is Addressed
1	II	*Through several different scenarios in Track II, Lts interim time will be better utilized than in the past.
2	II	*Through Scenarios 1 and 4 in Track II, Lts skills and knowledge will be utilized and enhanced. *Scenario 1: Lts employ their skills and knowledge in the civilian world through work or higher education. *Scenario 4: Lts enter ALP where commanders request good Lts to fill challenging, short-term positions.
3	II	*Track II, Scenario 2: AF and 2Lts have a choice for first assignment. *Lts can pick an assignment that is challenging, satisfying and meaningful to them.
4	I and II	*By implementing the 4 scenarios in Track II, fewer Lts will be lined up in the training pipeline. *There will be less frustration while waiting for training, and mission readiness will be achieved much faster.

Model Feedback

Overall, the feedback from both officers regarding the model was positive. Each officer mentioned that the researcher had a good understanding of the issues involved in the assignment process. In addition, both officers stated that the ideas presented in the proposed model were

good ones. They also added useful insights about the current system and why it is not able to efficiently utilize all APT Lts.

Model Modification. The officers gave no specific suggestions for improvement to the model. However, they did recognize several logistical constraints and concerns. One of their concerns was that placing 2Lts in positions in the other Armed Services might actually contribute to turnover. If officers found another service more suitable, they might want to stay permanently (S. A. Nipper, personal communication, April 6, 2001).

Another concern was that it might not be a highly beneficial decision to replace Reservists with Lts who have had no formal training. The inexperienced Lt would not be able to complete the same tasks as a Reservist and would require too much on-the-job-training, making the switch possibly more costly than beneficial (N. Golden, personal communication, April 3, 2001).

One final concern that emerged was that it might not be a problem in the current assignment system that causes Lts to enter into the Non-Strategical/Collateral category. Instead, the officers mentioned that often times Lts' casual duties are specific to their base. Some bases have full-time jobs for APT Lts while others may spend a lot of time on additional duties (N. Golden, personal communication, April 3, 2001). This inconsistency of duties across bases creates the dichotomy of jobs that emerged as one of the four major themes from the questionnaire data.

Overall, the interest and response by the reviewers was positive. Several logistical concerns and constraints were offered, but no significant changes to the model were suggested. In addition, it is encouraging to note that the model was forwarded, at the initiative of the two

reviewing officers, to a Colonel and several other higher authorities for consideration and evaluation for possible adoption in part or in whole.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Stage I. Stage I consisted of several phases that eventually resulted in the identification of major themes about 2Lts' views of interim duty through the use of a probe survey, personal interviews and a final questionnaire. First a probe questionnaire was distributed to 75 Class of 2000 graduates. Thirty-one responses were received. Next, in-depth personal interviews were conducted on five of the original probe respondents. Based on these interviews, four major issues were identified. Using the four identified issues as a foundation, a final questionnaire was then produced and sent to 125 USAFA graduates from the Class of 2000. Thirty-six responses to the final questionnaire were received. The researcher, along with two experienced Air Force officers, then identified common themes that were revealed through the final questionnaire. The major themes that emerged were consistent with the four issues expressed by the five original probe respondents who were personally interviewed. They are listed below.

Second Lts from the USAFA Class of 2000 are experiencing:

- 1) Ineffective use of time. →→→ (Effectiveness Issue)
- 2) Underutilization of skills. →→→ (Efficiency Issue)
- 3) Dichotomy of difficulty, meaning, and satisfaction in interim duties.
→→→(Enhancement Issue)
- 4) Anxiety and frustration based on the extended wait for training or AFSC-specific jobs. →→ →(Effectiveness, Efficiency and Enhancement Issue)

From the study, it can be construed that across the Air Force, graduates from the USAFA Class of 2000 consistently sense these deficiencies in effectiveness, efficiency, and enhancement.

The identification of these concerns and their constancy throughout the study were useful for Stage II where the proposed model began to take shape.

Stage II. Stage II of the study resulted in the formation of a proposed model that would change the current assignment system. The results of the final questionnaire were used to evolve a proposed model for the “first assignment” system. Once the model was formed it was then sent to two Air Force officers (the officers were not the same officers involved in the triangulation process) for review and any resulting recommendations for improvement. The email and attached document that was sent to the two officers can be viewed in Appendix F. The pair of officers was chosen because of their significant role in the USAFA “first assignment” system.

Overall, the reviewers provided positive feedback about the proposed model. They presented several logistical constraints that may exist, but no significant suggestions for improvement were recommended. In addition, the officers took the initiative to forward the model to higher authorities for possible development and implementation.

Evaluation of Research

Strengths. One of the strengths of this research is that the data that resulted from the questionnaire closely resembled the issues that were identified after an interview with five original probe respondents. The consistency of comments suggests that overall the questionnaire was valid and successfully attained usable information.

Another strength of the study is that several esteemed Air Force officers were involved in the research process. The officers’ experience and expertise added a great amount of legitimacy to the interpretation of the data and elements of the proposed model.

The researcher was a member of the USAFA Class of 2000 and therefore has first-hand experience with the current assignment system. A strength of the research design was to address researcher bias by having the data analyzed through a triangulation process.

A final strength of this study is that a high percentage of the sampled population responded. The probe questionnaire was sent to 75 people and 31 responded. That is a response rate of 41.3%. For the final questionnaire, out of 125 who were sent the instrument, (several of whom were also sent the probe questionnaire) 36 responded. That is a response rate of 28.8%. However, it is important to note that of the 125 Lts who were sent the final questionnaire, 75 of them were the same people who were sent the probe questionnaire. Only 8 of the original probe group responded to the final questionnaire, so the remaining 28 questionnaire responses came from the added group of 50 Lts. That amounts to a response rate of 56% for the new group. These high response rates suggest that Lts are interested in helping find a way to improve the current assignment system.

Limitations. One of the weaknesses about this study was the small number of participants. Out of a total population of 926 USAFA graduates from the Class of 2000 only 36 participated in the survey. In addition, the subjects' contact information was obtained through a class website, USAFA2000.com, which only lists the electronic mail addresses of those graduates who have submitted their information to the site. Thus, the sample population was not truly random and cannot sufficiently represent the entire class.

The lack of diversity amongst the sample population was also a weakness. The majority (78%) of the survey participants had an AFSC of 92TO, which indicates a rated status. In addition, only 13.8% of the survey participants were female. Thus, pilots and males were highly over-represented in this study.

Another limitation of the study was the survey instrument. The way the questionnaire was worded may have caused a certain amount of confusion for participants. Question 2 asked, a) What positive experiences have you had while on casual status, and b) What impact did this experience have upon you? Responses for both sections of this question resulted in strikingly similar responses. This suggests that participants may not have differentiated between part a and part b. Rather, they may have inferred that both parts were inquiring about the same concept. Consequently, the responses for parts a and b did not address two different concepts (positive experiences and subsequent positive impacts). The same event occurred with the two parts of Question 3, which addressed negative experiences. Based on the similar responses for questions 2 and 3, it is observed that the instrument was not as discriminating in getting focused data as it could have been.

A final limitation to the study was the perception that this study could have repercussions on participants. Participants knew that the researcher was a member of the USAFA Class of 2000 and a graduate student. Therefore, they could have felt that their responses would not be anonymous and could eventually affect their careers, making them more likely to hold back their honest feelings and opinions.

Proposed Research

Although this research involved only a limited number of participants, it provides a basis to continue to address first assignment system issues for 2Lts. Any additional research should utilize a more random and representative sample that seeks out all AFSCs (rated and non-rated), Lts with long and short interim assignments, and Lts of both genders.

A new first assignment model for 2Lts has been proposed in this paper and in order to further validate the model, it should be tested on the general population of USAFA graduates. A

place to start would be to present the current and proposed models to a population of USAFA graduates and ask them (through a survey) which model they would prefer, if they could relive their experiences with the first assignment system. For this study, it would be important to survey graduated Lts because of their experience with the current system and its effects. Lts with no experience would not be able to make an educated decision whether or not the new model would be an improvement or not.

If the new model were proven to be a better system, the model would then need to be implemented to a small population to iron out the details of each track, and make any changes in order for the model to be effective.

What Happens Next?

The interest and response by the reviewing officers regarding the proposed model was undoubtedly positive. Consequently, they have forwarded the model to higher authorities for consideration and evaluation for adoption. Implementation of the whole model is highly unlikely, however, it is possible that elements of the model could be utilized by the Air Force in the near future. Whatever the case may be, any use of the model will be a step toward making needed improvements in the current assignment system.

References

- Air Force Survey Branch, Directorate of Operations, Air Force Personnel Center. (2000). 2000 Follow-up quality of life survey. Randolph, AFB, TX: Department of the Air Force.
- Employee involvement is the key to a successful work/life program. (2001). HR Focus, 78(2), 6-7.
- Stanley, L. C. (2001). Talking paper on Air Force officer retention. [On-line]. Available: www.randolph.afpc.af.mil.

Appendix A- Major Concerns Obtained Through Personal Interviews

<u>Major Themes about Interim Duty from Personal Interviews</u>
1) Ineffective use of time (Effectiveness issue)
2) Underutilization of skills (Efficiency issue)
3) Dichotomy of difficulty, responsibility, meaning and satisfaction (Enhancement issue)
4) Anxiety and frustration about delay to training or AFSC-specific job (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Enhancement issue)

Appendix B- List of Themes and their Frequency from the Final Questionnaire

<u>Subject #</u>	<u>Gender: M=1, F=2</u>	<u>AFSC</u>	<u>Casual Length (months)</u>	<u>Q#1</u>
1	1	14N1	12	1
2	2	92TO	8	1
3	1	92TO	2.5	1
4	2	33S1	0	4
5	1	14N1	1.5	1
6	2	33S1	12	1
7	1	92TO	9	3
8	1	92TO	10	1
9	1	92TO	13	1
10	1	92TO	10	1
11	1	92TO	0.5	3
12	1	92TO	9	3
13	1	92TO	8	1
14	1	92TO	12	1
15	1	92TO	10	1
16	1	92TO	2	1
17	2	21A1	12	4
18	1	92TO	1	2
19	1	71S1	2	1
20	1	92TO	12	1
21	1	92TO	1	1
22	1	92TO	10	1
23	2	92TO	14	1
24	1	92TO	7	1
25	1	92TO	9	1
26	1	92TO	12	1
27	1	92TO	12	1
28	1	92TO	9	1
29	1	92TO	8	1
30	1	92TO	3	1
31	1	92TO	8	1
32	1	92TO	12	1
33	1	92TO	9	1
34	1	92TO?	9	1
35	1	21T1	0	1
36	1	62E1E	0	x

Q#2a	Theme	Frequency
1	What I'm doing is making a difference	II
2	Good transition from cadet to officer	III
3	Chance to interact with higher ranking officers	I
4	Learned a lot about the flying world (how it operates)	VIII
5	I got to fly a lot	XII
6	I've learned a lot about my job	V
7	I've gotten to work with officers and enlisted	VI
8	My job helped the base and didn't waste time	I
9	Got to wear civilian clothes	I
10	Being on my own	I
11	Coming up with work w/ no supervision	II
12	Doing lots of public speaking	I
13	Becoming more proud of being a USAFA grad	I
14	I've learned how impt working relationships are	I
15	Time to gather thoughts	II
16	Have learned about the real AF	VIII
17	Can prepare for UPT	III
18	Experience working with AF personnel	I
19	Completed SERE	I
20	Lots of responsibility and freedom	III
21	Time to get settled and talk to student pilots	I
22	Made new friends/contacts	II
23	Its been a good learning experience	II
24	I've gotten to travel on missions worldwide	I
25	Learned about other jobs in the AF	II
26	Gained people skills	I
27	Saw life at USAFA as an instructor	II
28	Mentoring from other pilots	I
29	Built up my confidence for pilot training	I

<u>Q#2b</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1	Learned about planning and politics	I
2	Thought more about what I want in life	I
3	Got to see operational AF	VI
4	Gave me time to get used to living on my own	I
5	Refreshed me!	II
6	I've learned officers can't always delegate and be respected	I
7	Had responsibility of dealing with civilian contractors	I
8	I'm more proud of the AF	I
9	I better understand how to listen to and appreciate co-workers (enlisted)	IIII
10	I learned people need to be taken care of b/c they do extra work for no pay	I
11	Thankful for a 10-mnth vacation	I
12	Gained an understanding of how everything fits together	I
13	Improved skills and abilities	III
14	Increased knowledge base	III
15	Has made me a better officer	II
16	Forced me to work w/ non-USAFA officers and enlisted	II
17	Job will benefit me as a pilot with non-rated experience	I
18	Not enough time to get real AF experience	I
19	Happy not a cadet anymore	I
20	Has helped me decide what I want to fly/make career decisions	IIII
21	Learned what to and not to do	I
22	I'm better prepared about basic AF stuff	I
23	Improved my view of officers	I
24	Developed teaching/communication skills	I
25	Motivated me to be a better officer	I
26	Allowed me to focus on officership	I
27	Broader sense of leadership	I
28	Has gotten me excited about being a pilot in the AF	II
29	Humbled me- I was at the bottom of the totem pole	I
30	I was treated professionally every day	I
31	Taught me how much I still have to learn	I
32	Has made me more patient	I

Q#3a	Theme	Frequency
1	Treated like a "lowly" Lt	I
2	Politics	I
3	Lack knowledge and tech skills	II
4	Have to find ways to stay busy	III
5	I did not choose to be in this career field	I
6	I'm behind other non-rated 2Lts	I
7	Been away from my husband	II
8	My job is useless/boring	IIII
9	I'm not here long enough to learn any type of job	I
10	Too long	IIII
11	Bad location	I
12	Disappointed in the officer corps	I
13	Many tasks are well below my level of education and skill (menial tasks)	VI
14	Very little training at USAFA (on forms, ratings, etc)	I
15	I feel like I'm wasting time	III
16	Couldn't learn my job b/c it kept changing	I
17	Don't go to be as involved as I'd like	I
18	Seen many problems in a fighter community	I
19	Very little responsibility	I
20	APT year doesn't count toward commitment	I
21	Am unable to take any career broadening courses	I
22	Long hours	I
23	Still don't feel like I'm in the 'real' AF	I

Q#3b	Theme	Frequency
1	I was blacklisted by a LtCol for being assertive	I
2	Lack of importance	II
3	I have no use for the degree I earned at USAFA	II
4	Had to work extra shifts	I
5	Communication problems between civ. And mil.	II
6	Being apart from my husband	I
7	Not making an impact	I
8	They don't know what to do w/ me	I
9	Length of wait	IIII
10	200 inches of snow	I
11	I was only assigned one odd job in 2.5 weeks	I
12	I do more work than Cpts and Maj's in my unit	I
13	Sink or swim experience	I
14	See things that need changing but I can't b/c I'm too new	I
15	Wasting time in squad. when I could do other things	II
16	Learned why pilots are leaving AF (TDYs, bad assmts, getting kicked out of cockpit)	I
17	I could have started earlier but the system didn't give me a choice	I
18	Have seen that AF assignments are not always fair	I
19	I had nothing to do most of the time	I

Q#4a	Theme	Frequency
1	2001's new system has improved the system	I
2	More training slots	II
3	Better-aligned slots for non-rated	I
4	Allow cadets to have more input into their casual job	II
5	Match assignments with majors from the Academy	I
6	Stagger amount of people sent on casual instead of one big lump on 1 Aug	I
7	Give option to choose assgmt bases	II
8	Give casuals more guidance about their jobs- e.g. a manuel	IIII
9	Provide accountability so Lts aren't left useless	I
10	Make everyone do casual	I
11	Stress the importance of school, military at USAFA	I
12	If < 6 weeks before UPT shouldn't be assigned a job at another base...makes it complicated	I
13	Let higher ranking cadets do IFT first, so when early UPT slots open up they can take them	I
14	Speed up training pipeline	IIII
15	Find meaningful jobs for casual Lts	II
16	Lts should get the correct info about assgmts	I
17	Training shouldn't be backed up so far	I
18	Keep casual short for Lts learning about their AFSC	I
19	Work more with fam situations	I
20	Release Lts until UPT to get education	I
21	Create more UPT bases	I
22	Tell cadets that good jobs are out there, they have to find them	I
23	USAFA needs a consistent assignment system	II
24	Each specific base needs to more efficiently use their 2Lts	I
25	Casual jobs should include more varied jobs and experiences	I
26	Personnel's lack of urgency and professionalism needs to be improved	I

<u>Q#4b</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1	People get jobs that they want	I
2	Jobs will be more meaningful	I
3	More responsibility	I
4	People will have better attitudes	I
5	People will enjoy their jobs which guarantees better success	V
6	Base won't be overloaded	I
7	Casuals won't have meaningless jobs	I
8	Have an idea of what to expect	II
9	Decrease UPT loads so Lts get AF experience- allows for better pilot completion of UPT	I
10	Help cadets realize they have control over their careers, lives, etc.	II
11	Lts would become mission qualified faster	II
12	In meaningful jobs, Lts would become integrated into their unit socially and professionally	I
13	USAF needs to teach more of the requirements for the real AF	III
14	Shorter assignments minimizes bitterness	I
15	If people have to wait for UPT, they forget IFT knowledge and gain same habits that exist at USAFA	I
16	Will reduce # of casual assignments	I
17	Will decrease length of time on casual	I
18	Will make cadets more interested in learning about AF job options	I
19	With a consistent system, cadets could plan appropriately (no surprises)	I
20	Less disparity among 2Lt jobs if they all had the same work requirements (hrs worked/day, etc)	I
21	2Lts will learn more about the AF	I
22	Will create a more fair and consistent system	I
23	Will help cadets make more informed decisions about their base/career choices, etc	I

Appendix C- Spreadsheet Summary of Each Respondent's Questionnaire Responses

Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12
Q#1	1	1	1	4	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	4	2	1	1

21	22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E
1	10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*	21
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12	1

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Q#2a

22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Individual Number
M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Gender
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E	AFSC
10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0	Interim Length (months)

Total

[illegible]

Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*	21
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12	1

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22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Individual Number
M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Gender
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E	AFSC
10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0	Interim Length (months)

Total

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Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*	21
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12	1

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22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Individual Number
M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Gender
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E	AFSC
10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0	Interim Length (months)

Total

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Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*	21
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12	1

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22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Individual Number
M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Gender
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E	AFSC
10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0	Interim Length (months)

Total

Q#3b THEMES																
															1	1
															2	2
															2	3
															1	4
												1			2	5
															1	6
															1	7
															1	8
															4	9
											1				1	10
															1	11
															1	12
															1	13
															1	14
		1									1				2	15
				1											1	16
					1										1	17
						1									1	18
							1								1	19

Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*	21
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12	1

Q#44a THEMES																					
1	1																				
2		1															1				
3		1																			
4			1																		
5				1																	
6					1																
7						1								1							
8							1														
9							1														
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24																					
25																					
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22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Individual Number
M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Gender
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E	AFSC
10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0	Interim Length (months)

Total

																Q#4a THEMES
															1	1
															2	2
															1	3
		1													2	4
															1	5
															1	6
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							1							1	4	8
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															1	10
															1	11
															1	12
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															4	14
1						1									2	15
1															1	16
															1	17
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															1	19
															1	20
															1	21
			1												1	22
					1							1			2	23
											1				1	24
											1				1	25
													1		1	26

Individual Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7*	8*	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18*	19	20*	21
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	M
AFSC	14N1	92TO	92TO	33S1	14N1	33S1	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21A1	92TO	71S1	92TO	92TO
Interim Length (months)	12	8	2.5	0	1.5	12	9	10	13	10	0.5	9	8	12	10	2	12	1	2	12	1

Q#4b THEMES																					
1	1																				
2		1																			
3		1																			
4			1																		
5			1	1		1										1					
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23																					

22*	23	24	25*	26	27	28*	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	Individual Number	
M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Gender	
92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	92TO	21T1	62E1E	AFSC	
10	14	7	9	12	12	9	8	3	8	12	9	9	0	0	Interim Length (months)	

Total

															Q#4b THEMES	
															1	
															2	
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														3	13	
														1	14	
														1	15	
1														1	16	
1														1	17	
			1											1	18	
					1									1	19	
							1							1	20	
											1			1	21	
												1		1	22	
														1	23	

Appendix D- Questionnaire

Hello!

This is Jen Engh (Class of 2000, CS-28) I am at grad school at CSU and I'm doing some research on the current assignment system for 2Lts. The following is a survey that will aid in my research efforts.

The information that will be gathered from your responses will help me to evaluate the the overall newly commissioned officer's perspective of the current Assignment System for USAFA graduates. In order to gain a *deeper* understanding of specific issues, please take no more than 10 minutes to answer the following four questions.

Thank you again for your input into the study of this critical matter! Your effort will provide information from which to begin serious discussion regarding the systems adequacy and effectiveness.

Sincerely,
2Lt Jen Engh

****Before you begin, please answer (underline, highlight, or fill in the blank) the following questions regarding your demographic information:**

- * Gender: M or F
- * AFSC: _____
- * Length of casual assignment: ____ months
- * Job title while on casual status: _____
- * Casual status base: _____, AFB or AB
- * Current base and job title: _____

1. Select only one of the responses provided with this question.

Overall, would you rate your casual experience as:

- a. Positive and beneficial
- b. Negative and not beneficial
- c. Positive but not beneficial
- d. Negative but beneficial

2. a. What positive experiences have you had while on casual status?

b. What impact did this experience have upon you? (ie: your view of the Airforce, yourself as an officer, you skill development etc..)

3. a. How has your casual experience been negative?

b. What factors or experiences have contributed to your assessment that your casual assignment has been negative?

4. a. How do you think the assignment system for USAFA graduates could be improved?

b. Why or how do you think your suggested changes will improve the system?

Appendix E- Triangulation Themes From Final Questionnaire

Major Themes- Question 2a	Major Themes- Question 2b
2Lts are learning about and appreciating the operational AF	2Lts appreciate working with AF personnel
2Lts are learning job skills and professional awareness	2Lts are developing skills and knowledge for their future AF career
2Lts are experiencing a positive transition from USAFA to the AF	2Lts' casual status has helped make and reinforce career decisions
2Lts feel good about the influence they are making	Casual has given Lts a broader perspective of officership in the operational AF
Major Themes- Question 3a	Major Themes- Question 3b
Lts feel they don't have the necessary skills/abilities to perform their interim job	Casual jobs are not making an efficient use of 2Lts' time
Length (too long) and location of assignments create a lack of motivation	2Lts feel that their USAFA degrees are irrelevant to their job requirements
Casual jobs are not making an efficient use of 2Lts' time	The wait for training is too long
Jobs are not challenging and are often below the skill/ability levels of 2Lts	2Lts are experiencing frustration with the location and circumstances of assignments
Major Themes- Question 4a	Major Themes- Question 4b
Provide more guidance on casual job expectations and requirements	Job satisfaction will lead to job success

Provide more/faster training	Shorter assignments will increase morale
Provide meaningful work for 2Lts	2Lts will be better prepared for their jobs after USAFA
	Lts will have more control over their career choices/assignments

Appendix F- Email and Document Sent to Reviewing Officers